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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

JUNE 1st, 1850.

CATHEDRAL MUSIC AND COMPOSERS.

No. II.

Contributed by E. HOLMES, Author of the "Life of Mozart."

MATTHEW LOCK, in his anthem, "Lord let me know mine end," a composition probably of the date of Charles I, appears to have been one of the earliest cathedral musicians who considered and treated his subject dramatically. This anthem has been long disused, partly on account of its length, partly from the abilities it requires in numerous solo singers, and the risk of its thereby entailing some lapse in the solemnity of funeral rites; but notwithstanding the objections to which its construction is liable, the work, as a whole, offers strong evidence of the far-sighted and poetical genius of its author. Powerful expression of the words, contrast of harmony in the cadences, prolonged and unusual rhythmical periods in the melody, and an uncommon elegance and modernity in the harmony of the closes, render this anthem well worthy of the inspection and study of the musician who feels interested in the position of his country with respect to the general progress of the art. It is impossible to see a master of this comparatively rude age standing, as far as the music extant allow us to judge, almost alone, evoking for his purpose harmonies which have become characteristic of the German school who flourished more than a century after him—without the respect and admiration due to an extraordinary musical individuality.

As in the performance of cathedral music, expediency and convenience are rather consulted than the elevation or advantage of the art itself, Dr. Greene's anthem upon the same words has been found a good working substitute for the composition of Lock, and indeed for many other anthems which might vary this department of the service. That which is often repeated is easily done, and is preferred for the same reason. Boldness and originality of design, involving some difficulty in performance and some danger of being misunderstood by hearers, entitle the musician to a position of honour in ecclesiastical books, but by no means render him popular in cathedrals. In singing, "smooth things" go down best. When, therefore, we look in cathedral music for those compositions in which the mind of the artist has transcended his age and circumstances, and penetrated futurity, we invariably find them among the things most neglected in performance, and which are perhaps scarcely ever got up except at the accidental request of some enthusiast of sufficient influence.

We wonder how many persons in England have ever heard in public the full anthems of Purcell or Blow, or even this solitary anthem of Lock. Were the works which require even now the most intrepid reading, and certainty of intonation, ever actually performed; or were they mere exercises of the composer's skill and diligence, left to take their chance with posterity? If they *were* performed and pleased their auditory, the singers of the present day, who are perplexed by the intervals in unusual combination of the middle parts, have made a retrograde movement; and our ears, in the 19th century, have probably lost some part of the pleasure in the full harmonious close which was experienced in an age of comparative barbarism two hundred years ago. For the whole art of fine music, as we now understand it, consists in the suspension of the interest of the hearer; in the avoidance and abhorrence of the commonplace and conventional; and in the skill and effect with which the close is wrought. In this view of music, composers of the 19th century concur with those of the 17th; Beethoven, the last of the classical symphonists and quartett writers, shakes hands with Matthew Lock, Purcell, Wise, Blow, and Humphreys. Handel's age completed vocal fugue, and illustrated the art of counterpoint in perfection; but we lost in that period many elegant chords of accompaniment, and many bold and vigorous combinations of harmony.

Dr. Burney, who appears to have been brought up in the most reverent submission to the theory current in his day, has devoted two or three pages of his history to an exposition of the "crudities" of Dr. Blow. The singling out of Dr. Blow seems ungenerous; but Burney is an amiable and candid writer, whose nerves may have been a little enervated at the Italian Opera, and the truth compels him to state that he entertains the same horror at certain things in Purcell. He cannot bear the major third with the minor sixth, and detests that venerable and orthodox cathedral cadence of the third touched as a passing note against the fourth and fifth. Of Purcell, he says: "the ear will patiently bear very rough usage from an artist who in general makes it such ample amends; however, there are limits beyond which it is unsafe to exercise cruelty of all kinds; and the auricular sense will be deadened, disgusted, or rendered indifferent to music's powers by too harsh treatment."

This sentence certainly discovers a benevolent consideration for our "auricular" sensations; but the misfortune is, that it applies not only to the comparatively sealed books of the original offenders in Boyce, but also to the popular Mass in C of Beethoven, where sevenths unresolved, sevenths and fourths moving upward, the discord and its resolution clashing together, and the same

note sharp and natural, characterise the pungent passages at which our instructed public prick up their ears, and delight to recognize the mighty master. Nevertheless, the rule which informs us that such things ought *not* to be done loses none of its stringency on the public at large; and small offenders in composition may still justly receive the bastinado of criticism when great ones escape unscathed. "Nice customs curtsey to great kings."

There is no eminent and daring violation of the conventional in an established master which does not suggest an occasion of profitable thought. What greater trespass on orthodoxy can be imagined than to make a chorus terminate on a discord of $\frac{9}{8}$, as Handel has done in the fine dramatic chorus of Philistines, "Hear us, our God," in *Samson*? But the situation evidently dictated this poetical licence. In the idea of the composer the building was falling on the heads of the crowd while their prayer was yet unfinished; and all who hear this chorus feel its descriptive force the more from this picturesque and unexpected termination. The ear is fully satisfied by the perfect close of the cadence which is carried on in the instrumental symphony. A similar conclusion occurs in the first chorus of the Requiem of Hector Berlioz; the voices cease upon the harmony of the seventh, and the orchestra finishes the phrase. As Handel's works are little known in France, Berlioz had to bear all the critical obloquy thrown on this innovation, as if it had been committed for the first time. The earnest musicians of all ages seem to unite in one common effort to extend the sphere of expression; they all feel that if they are to work in the element of their predecessors by sufferance and authority, their art is lost—music must remain stationary. Thus each in his turn commits "auricular" offences for the public benefit.

It is no discredit to our old cathedral composers that they had ideas of combination beating about in their minds, which it required an age of more advanced experience perfectly to illustrate. Matthew Lock, in the anthem we have noticed, wishing to give a pathetic expression to the words "For I am a stranger with thee," has touched an $F\sharp$ in the treble against an $F\sharp$ in the alto part; and though the manner in which he has done it is not peculiarly grateful to modern ears, it is not to be denied that he has selected in the diminished octave a most expressive and pathetic interval. In recitative of the most impassioned kind this combination has been repeatedly sanctioned; and Beethoven seems to have thought so well of it, as to have formed out of it one of the most striking passages of the Kyrie of the Mass in C, as will appear on referring to the violin parts of that movement eleven bars from the end. Mozart has exem-

plified another form of the same combination, namely, the augmented unison, in a passage of such smooth and voluptuous harmony that we are tempted to quote it. The $C\sharp$ and $C\flat$ sound extremely well together in this conclusion to the Minuet of his quintett in C, which is by the way a memorable instance of Mozart's full harmonizing of a simple melody first given in a bold harmony of thirds on the two violins:—



The next quotation from the first adagio of the quintett in G minor may appear somewhat harsh and dissonant, as well as capricious in the accent. Be it remembered, that in the original this phrase is introduced by proper antecedents; yet with all the softening effect of preparation the passage is audacious, and proves that the fine organs of Mozart did not flinch at the diminished octave and something more:—



In truth, we have little sympathy with those extraordinarily fine nerves and effeminate auricular sensibilities which Dr. Burney seems to approve in his own musical constitution. Those who do not feel in themselves the vivacious sting of expectation and excitement which bold discords create, it is to be feared know little of the full fruition of the pleasure of harmony. All the great composers unite in making music the pleasant deception of the ear, and conduct us through the mazes of composition in their own way. Even Milton, an amateur, perceived that the skilled organists of his day employed "artful and *unimaginable* touches." Instead of condemning the "crudities" of the Purcell school on the testimony of some tinkling instrument in the chamber of the historian-critic, for which they were never intended, it is to be wished that these full anthems with all their alleged defects had been maintained in cathedrals with something of the same enthusiasm which gave them birth. They have

never in our experience received a fair trial. Produced only on very rare occasions, they have foundered through the doubt and hesitation of singers, who, though they could perhaps sing out of tune easily enough, stumbled and were at fault when called upon to express the scientific and harmonious discords of the composer.

Admitting that in the full anthems and various canons of the ecclesiastical period alluded to there are many notes and passages of tough and difficult digestion, we shall always consider it as a loss to music that such choruses as "And so will we not go back from thee," "Through God will we do great acts," and others of the like by Purcell and his contemporaries, should have fallen into gradual disuse, and have become almost wholly supplanted by more convenient and popular modern compositions. It seems as if cathedral music had been perpetually subject to the control of such powerful amateurs as his Majesty Charles II., who when good things were recommended to him would reject them, and say "Have I not ears?" It is true that we have no longer the cornets and violins in the organ loft which the King, as head of the church, placed there to assist in playing the symphonies, to the great perplexity of the venerable Dr. Child and Mr. Edward Low; but innovations as complete, though not quite so scandalous, have been gradually established in many of our cathedral and collegiate establishments. Under whose influence and authority the change has taken place is not known; but whoever has the direction seems still to say "Have I not ears?" though not so magisterially and openly as his musical Majesty.

have so honorably appreciated Italian and German art, may be permitted to feel with some nationality the merits of their own countrymen and though to say that poetical expression, bold modulation, and a vigour of style which is found nowhere else, sprung up in England about the Restoration, greatly promoting the advance of music, be merely a commonplace, it may be worth while to repeat it for the sake of the rising generation of musicians. Had crudities and nothing else characterised the composers of the epoch referred to, the neglect of them might be justified ; but if phrases of vocal elegance and smoothness are desired, they may be found even in the works of Blow.

(To be continued.)

On Thursday evening the first practice meeting of the various classes of Dr. Mainzer's Normal Music School, was held in the Free-trade Hall, and was very numerous and respectably attended. The following extract from a statement in the programme of the evening will best explain the nature of this meeting:—

“ In consequence of a meeting convened by his worship the Mayor, and held in the Town Hall, the Normal Music School of Manchester was opened by Dr. Mainzer on the 15th October last, in Newall's Buildings. Five classes have since been instructed, as follow, viz:—

		Pupils.
1.	15th October, class for operatives, attended by	... 363
2.	„ ditto ditto	... 89
3.	20th October, class for teachers, apprentice-teachers, monitors, and monitresses	... 382
4.	19th February, class for operatives	... 576
5.	13th March, ditto ditto	... 535

1.945

Teachers, apprentice-teachers, and others, since they received their elementary instruction in vocal music at the Normal Music School, where they have acquired considerable proficiency in the singing exercises and choruses, have taught numbers of children in their respective schools; and before the close of the season, the committee intend to have another meeting, superior in number, as it is intended to offer an opportunity to the pupils of the pupils who have attended the Normal Music School to join in the singing exercises.

On Wednesday evening there was a full rehearsal of the 1900 pupils. The hall was quite crowded; there must have been, including pupils and auditors, nearly 5000 persons present.

On Thursday evening there was a very large and respect-

* We write this from memory, at the distance of many years. On referring to the passage, it appears to be softened by the omission of the suspension of the 4th; but the tribute to antiquity is the same.